

Dear Professor Demasure
Dear Karlijn,

It is for me a great honour and a great joy to confer on you today, in the name of His Majesty the King of the Belgians, an important decoration for your impressive contribution to the prevention of sexual abuse of minors, an issue which has been plaguing society and the Church for many years.

You were born, dear Karlijn, not such a long time ago, in the Flemish city of Kortrijk, where you also studied in a well-known Catholic school. You were fortified in your faith through contact with the very open sisters of the school and, as a result, you decided to study religious sciences at the Catholic University of Leuven.

After having taught religion in different Belgian schools, but also in Congo, you went back to university and graduated in theology, also at the Catholic University in Leuven.

When teaching in secondary schools, you were able to create a relation of confidence with some of your students and discovered that one of them was being abused by her father. It was a shock for you, and you decided to devote a thesis to the psycho-spiritual accompaniment of the victims of sexual abuse, an issue which at that time was not yet very much in the limelight. In little time, you became one of the most renowned specialists in the world on that issue.

The number of your articles, conferences, publications on this issue is amazing. You were a member of the "Adriaenssens Commission" in charge of investigating complaints of sexual abuse committed by some Belgian clergymen. It was a difficult time because of the high number of complaints to investigate in very little time.

In 2008, you crossed the Atlantic Ocean and settled in Ottawa, as an associate professor at Saint Paul University, where you also held the position of dean of the Faculties of Human Sciences and of Philosophy.

No wonder that, with this very rich experience, you were asked to become the executive director of the newly created Centre for Child Protection at the Gregorian University. This Centre elaborates e-learning programmes for preventing abuse of children and vulnerable persons. Just a few weeks ago, we saw on Vatican News a picture of the recent promotion of students with a Diploma in Safeguarding of Minors.

Dear Karlijn,

In parallel with this very active professional life, and with your beloved husband, Stefaan, you have raised 4 children, some of whom are with us today. I can imagine how animated your house in Velletri must be when the whole family is reunited.

Dear Professor,

By conferring upon you the Order of the Crown, with the grade of Officer, my country, your country, wants to pay tribute to the service you have done for so many vulnerable victims of abuse. The Belgian authorities also want to underscore the cause to which you have have dedicated your whole life.

Dear Professor,

In the name of His Majesty the King of the Belgians and by virtue of the powers conferred on me, I bestow on you the Order of the Crown, with the grade of Officer.